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HALDIMAND NORFOLK STUDY

ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

General Publications

**LOCAL ORIENTATION
AND
IDENTIFICATION STUDY**

VOLUME 3



EARL BERGER LIMITED

DAVID JACKSON & ASSOCIATES LIMITED

Earl Berger Limited

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ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

LOCAL ORIENTATION AND IDENTIFICATION STUDY

VOLUME 3

CROSS SECTION OF OPINION

ANALYSIS OF GROUP INTERVIEWS

EARL BERGER LIMITED

DAVID JACKSON & ASSOCIATES LIMITED

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VOLUME 3
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INTRODUCTION

This is Part Three of the three-part Report on Local orientation and Identification carried out for the Haldimand Norfolk Study by Earl Berger Limited in conjunction with David Jackson and Associates Limited. Part Three contains a summary description and analysis of the tape recordings of 30 of the 159 group interviews held across the Counties of Haldimand and Norfolk and adjacent areas.

This report was intended as an exploratory examination of a representative sample to determine citizen's opinions on a wide range of subjects which could not be handled adequately by a questionnaire. We also judged the usefulness of auditing a larger number of the tape-recorded meetings. The tapes showed such a broad and strong consensus on all major matters that we do not believe that a more extensive auditing is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

We consider the citizens' distrust of the Provincial Government to be the most serious problem facing the Government in its planning for the Haldimand Norfolk area. This distrust is not related to any political party, or to any individual or group. Rather it is directed to the process of Government itself, and particularly towards the bureaucracy of government. Previous methods of planning and implementing local government reorganization have diminished the faith of citizens in the democratic process and the effectiveness of representative government. A typical comment was made by a Windham respondent:

"We can do what we want, as long as we do what Toronto tells us to do."

The county boards of education have not succeeded in establishing a positive rapport with the citizenry, and give

citizens the impression of being unresponsive to citizen needs and inaccessible to citizen submissions. Participants speak of distrust, helplessness, frustration, and even fear.¹

A more flexible approach is necessary, one more attuned and responsive to citizen aspirations and needs as these are articulated by the citizens. It is critical that genuine citizen participation take place in the planning and decision-making process, and be seen to take place.

The methods used to date by the Haldimand Norfolk Study represent a valid beginning and should be continued and expanded.

The data suggests strongly that citizens are most concerned about the future of their communities and of the area in general. Their concerns centre around urbanization, industrialization, pollution. It is widely agreed that stronger planning powers are required and that some form of inter-municipal or inter-county planning be instituted.

¹To some extent, participants' comments must be taken as the normal complaining about government found in any healthy, open society. It should be recalled that the participants rank high in political participation and political efficacy. Even so, the extent, and particularly the intensity, of their complaints, gives pause for serious consideration about the state of relations between government and citizen.

Considering the widespread discontent with the county board of education, we suggest that the first steps in regional planning begin amongst the municipalities, and that they be encouraged to develop such forms as meet their requirements and those of the Province over time. It follows that inter-municipal and inter-county cooperation will be required on other matters, and thus regionalism will develop over time. We are convinced that progress towards a regional form of government will receive public support if it is carried out in large measure by the citizens and their representatives, and arises in response to defined needs, and is not imposed by the Province.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There is strong opposition to regional government in all groups sampled both in Haldimand and Norfolk, and in the areas adjacent to the two counties, including Wainfleet Township in the Niagara Region. There is strong support for increasing the powers of local government.

Regional Government is not regarded as a means of restoring power to the local areas. Rather, it is considered to be another way to deprive local areas of the few remaining powers left to them; and to reduce even further the importance of the individual citizen. In this regard, the Provincial Government is seen not as the creation and servant of the citizenry, but as an independent power which increases its authority at the expense of the citizens. This belief appears to be unrelated to any specific political party, organization or group of individuals and is beyond political ideology.

Citizens are deeply distrustful of the larger units of government. They do not have confidence in their elected representatives to represent their interests, or

to control or even influence the bureaucracy they see growing up around them.

There is a strong feeling that democratic practices are being subverted.

There is considerable support for the type of political participation afforded by LOIS. At the same time, there is considerable scepticism about the usefulness of LOIS and citizen participation. Many persons doubt that the Provincial Government will pay any attention to the opinions of citizens. It is widely felt the Provincial Government will impose regional government regardless of citizen opinion. Participants place little faith in, or are unaware of, Provincial statements expressing a desire to improve the processes of citizen participation in government planning and decision making.

Participants' attitudes appear to be shaped by their experiences with, and perceptions of, centralized assessment, the Niagara Regional Government and the county boards of education. In the case of each of these, participants sometimes agree that some benefits have been

gained, but they are intensely concerned about what they consider to be the drawbacks. The ones most frequently mentioned are higher taxes, rising costs, loss of community autonomy, diminution of local government, insensitivity to local needs, remoteness from citizens, bureaucracy and red tape. Participants often speak of their sense of helplessness in the face of the larger government units with which they have to deal, and some speak of their fear.

There is concern that larger units of government will mean the end of voluntarism in the local community, the end of local community self-help. Participants from Wainfleet spoke of the decline of community organizations as one of the major consequences of the creation of the Niagara Region.

All participants speak highly of the county as an important part of their local identity. However, they are generally antagonistic to the one major form of county activity, the county boards of education.

Participants expressed strong concern for the future. Their attitude toward population growth generally is unfavourable: they also see it as destroying the quality of life they prefer. Their attitude towards industrialization is ambivalent: they fear it will destroy the environment and, at the same time, they hope it will provide sufficient jobs

in the area to enable the youth to find work and to keep families together.

A major concern is pollution. Participants see the environment threatened by urbanization, industrialization and poor planning. On these issues most participants are willing, many even support, a more effective and comprehensive government unit. They see government planning and regulation as the only authority strong enough to cope with the powerful forces of growth now at work in the area. There is no consensus on the form this planning authority would have; some participants speak of increased inter-municipal activity; others speak of county planning. There is no apparent support for regional planning except perhaps in the form of inter-county planning.

Participants are not clear what regional government actually means in terms of structure, organization, accessibility, responsiveness. Their previous experiences with centralization at a higher level have been bad. Participants want assurances the same mistakes will not be made again. They ask for time. Many suggest that regionalism begin slowly with joint cooperation between municipalities on various issues, and between the counties. They ask that

developments be allowed to move slowly and naturally according to need rather than according to an a priori scheme. Many expect the Provincial Government to impose regional government regardless of the mistakes in the past.

The only governmental form in which participants voluntarily expressed faith and confidence was local government.

METHOD

Originally 27 tapes were selected from groups in designated locations. While listening to the tape of each group, the auditors (2) noted issues on which there was significant disagreement. If, during the course of its meeting, the group in question did not resolve the difference of opinion among its members, the auditors chose an additional tape from that same location for analysis. The purpose here was to identify all significant points of contention and to examine them closely. There was no danger, given the attitude of most participants, that the points of consensus would be overlooked. In total, 30 groups were audited.

The auditors compiled two sets of notes: one based upon the discussions in each group; the other based on an index of themes raised during the discussions. The summary of findings is based upon that index.

Groups in the following areas were audited:

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of Groups Audited</u>
Haldimand	
Caledonia	2
Hagersville	3
Cayuga	1
Dunnville	1
Jarvis	2
Walpole	2
Oneida-Seneca	1
Cayuga North and South, and Rainham	1
	<u>13</u>
Norfolk	
Delhi	1
Simcoe	1
Charlotteville, Middleton, North Walsingham	1
Houghton, Port Rowan, South Walsingham	1
Townsend, Windham	1
Woodhouse	2
Waterford	1
Port Dover	1
Haldimand-Norfolk Border	1
	<u>10</u>
Adjacent Area	
Tillsonburg	2
Glandford	1
Norwich	1
Wainfleet	3
	<u>7</u>

SUMMARY OF GROUP INTERVIEWS

REGIONALISM

In all groups all discussions about regionalism and regional government are dominated by the participants' experience with three recent efforts at political centralization:

1. Regional Assessment
2. Niagara Regional Government
3. County Boards of Education

References to these three crop up continuously throughout all discussions. Participants feel themselves profoundly affected by these changes, judging by the frequency with which they bring these matters up. All references to regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk are explicitly or implicitly framed within the context of these developments. These developments stand for everything which the participants fear: loss of community, loss of political autonomy, loss of individual freedom, high taxes, loss of control over one's life and freedom, destruction of the human and natural environment, domination by civil servants. There is also practically no disagreement amongst the participants about the ill effects of the centralization process or the consequences for individual and group freedom if the process

continues unchecked and unaltered.²

Assessment

The centralization of assessment in Brantford apparently created substantial inconvenience and extra cost for many participants:

"You can't find anything out anymore...You want to find out something about your assessment now, you phone Cayuga. Cayuga doesn't know any more; you phone Brantford. Brantford has to ask about four men what you're talking about...It's the worst rigmarole you ever went through."
(Selkirk-Haldimand)

"...to get any kind of adjustment has gotten so involved that it has defeated the whole intent of it." (ibid)

"There's much more feeling against assessment than there was before...being unfair...it just hasn't worked." (ibid)

These comments are representative of those voiced at every group.³

²The purpose of this report is to summarize and analyze respondents' opinions. There is no attempt to judge the rightness or wrongness of these opinions.

³Unfavourable references to regional assessment, Niagara Regional Government and county boards of education were so frequent the auditors gave up trying to record them all, and noted only some of the most typical.

Participants complained that assessment officers didn't know the area well, that they spent too much time in their office and not enough in the field, that they made mistakes; that there was too much red tape and too many rules which didn't provide flexibility to deal with individual cases.

Niagara Regional Government

It is impossible to make any distinction between the attitudes of the respondents towards regional government in general and towards events in the Niagara Region. As one Dunnville resident said of the possibility of regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk:

"Are they using Niagara as a criterion to base this on? Because this is the only base we have to form our opinions."

"They say it's such a mess in Niagara...it's terrible...The Province wouldn't let them out." (Norwich)

There are three themes in this quote which constantly recur in all group meetings. The first is the actual state of the Niagara Regional Government. It is widely held to be costly, with taxes rising and services occasionally improving but often remaining the same or, in some cases,

deteriorating. Bureaucracy and red tape are held to be rife: representation is poor; the individual is powerless; there is nothing he can do to improve the situation or to protect himself.

The second theme is "They": "They" is Toronto; "They" is Queen's Park; "They" are the powers which impose their will upon the people:

"They've already got their minds made up." (Norwich)

"They don't listen to the farmers." (Charlottetown)

"They take the power from the townships and municipalities and the counties...(Simcoe)

This attitude, with all its accompanying implications of frustration and helplessness is summed up by the Windham resident who said:

"We can do whatever we want, as long as we do what Toronto tells us to do."

This attitude is closely tied to the strong sense of loss of community power and autonomy, and to the fear of encroaching big government discussed below.

The third theme is that of the prisoner, the helpless victim: "The Province wouldn't let them out." Constant reference was made to the efforts of St. Catharines to leave

the region and to the Province's imposition of regional government on the area. One has a sense of citizens feeling themselves locked into an imposed situation and unable to free themselves. The Provincial Government is seen not as the creation and servant of the people, but as an independent power which increases its authority at the expense of the people.

The strongest reactions to the Niagara Regional Government came from those participants living in the region. The following is based on three of the nine group interviews held in Wainfleet Township.

"God help them if they keep on. It won't just be the Frenchmen...it'll be everybody trying to get liberated. We're going to have a revolution on our hands." (Wainfleet)

"It's another example of things working opposite to what we think is a democratic process." (ibid)

"The democratic system has failed...All of the action occurs from the top and is forced down our throats, and if they don't like it action again comes from the top saying they're not allowed to change it anymore." (ibid)

"...some of us misguided people...thought that regional government must be good because...in a democratic system like this only good things are allowed to exist." (ibid)

"What can you do but go along with it?" (ibid)

"No one asked us about regional government." (ibid)

"...I didn't know too much about what was going on, and one day somebody said 'we've got regional government'." (ibid)

"...that's blasphemy, this regional government, to us who are in it." (ibid)

"...we feel so helpless in the face of the government..." (ibid)

"That's what bothers me most. If you say something you can't get any place with it...like St. Catharines...If we don't like something we should be able to vote against it. So long as somebody up in Toronto says 'no sir, boys, you're going to do it this way' we're not living in a democratic country anymore..." (ibid)

"I haven't been asked by any local politician...if I'm happy with it...it's there and you've got it, kid." (ibid)

Specific complaints range from loss of a local police force whose members knew the community well, to an impersonal bureaucratic school and social welfare structure. One of the participants, apparently involved in the social welfare system, commented that prior to the establishment of regional government everyone in her office knew everybody else and worked well together. With regional government, the individual county and township offices have been closed and social welfare activities centralized and highly structured:

"Now, the big problem is that there are directors and consultants, and senior consultants and junior consultants, so many different directors, so many different people, you don't know whom you're supposed to go to. Everyone is dissatisfied."

In most groups across the two counties, frequent mention was made of the likelihood that regional government, even county government, meant loss of citizen participation. Reference was made to this in the Wainfleet groups. According to Wainfleet participants a number of local volunteer organizations regionalized, thinking it would assist them to fit in with the new regional government structure and be more efficient. Now that the organizations have regionalized, they have had some difficulty in finding members to serve on their regional boards; also it has been difficult to find enough people to carry out canvassing in the local areas - there are no local boards anymore; there is a lack of volunteer members; public interest has dropped off.

A great deal of time in the Wainfleet groups was spent complaining about the regional school board and about the harmful effects of attempting to impose rigid standards across the region. Stories were told of teachers being removed from their duties, of maintenance men not being able to do their job properly, of excessive salaries for administrators, of these administrators giving orders

without knowing of local conditions, of impersonality, and of fear.

"You just feel so isolated. There they are, God almighty, and you don't dare question what they're doing..." (Wainfleet)

This comment was made by an employee who had had an unpleasant experience before a committee of the regional board of education: her remark sums up the growing gap between citizens and government, and the fearful attitude of many citizens to their new government. It was her feeling, and that of others, that this trend toward arbitrary government will continue, with the board and administrators increasingly removed from the people, inaccessible and unresponsive to them, and the individuals unable to have access to their government. One participant complained that previously, if he had a complaint, he picked up the phone or walked down the street and spoke to the official concerned; now he had to phone long distance to the regional office and pay for it: "Why should I have to pay for the long distance?"

Not all comments about the Niagara Region were negative. One participant point out that regionalization had improved the quantity of beds available for the elderly in homes for the aged; another referred to the increase in

special social welfare services; and another referred to the benefits of tax equalization. But these were not considered sufficient to outweigh the more serious losses:

"Everything we give up at the local level is a freedom lost and we'll never get it back."
(Wainfleet)

The following is a quotation from Wainfleet and is chosen to close this section on the Niagara Region, as much for its dramatic qualities as for its typicality:

"In Wainfleet township, millions of years ago, a huge beast reared its head on the horizon, and its brain was so far removed from its extremities, which must operate efficiently, that it no longer exists...In 1964 or 1965...this beast reared its head again, and the centre of administration... then became so far removed from the people that it must serve that it doesn't really know what's going on...and acts in a way that depersonalizes the citizens...it's supposed to serve..."

County Board of Education

No other event aroused such intense reaction from respondents in all areas. In some meetings, participants spent most of their time talking about their county board of education, and could only with difficulty be drawn into more general discussion of the future of their area. In all groups the introduction and performance of the county boards was the

single most common criterion used in judging the worth of regional government for the area.

"If it is anything like...regional schools, I'll fight regional government tooth and nail."
(Courtland, Norfolk)

"When I think of regional government after what the county schoolboards have done, I'm very leery of it." (Charlottesville, Norfolk)

People feel the county school board system was forced on them, and that they had not been told the truth:

"We were just sold right down the river. Boy, was it ever going to be cheap - bah!"

Everyone is acutely conscious of higher taxes and loss of control:

"At the start I was all in favour of the county school board because I figured it would be a saving to the taxpayer: it would be run more efficiently and everybody would be treated equally. It turned out that it cost...a lot more money. Before, trustees' meetings... didn't cost a cent, and the school board was in touch with the people...Now our school trustees could be way up at the other end of the county, maybe 30 miles away...and wouldn't pay much attention to what is going on down here anyway." (Charlottesville, Norfolk)

The constant refrain is higher taxes, along with de-personalization, loss of control and inefficiency. In every group there is the story of the janitor who is no longer

allowed to fix the broken pane in the school window himself, but has to phone long distance to the regional board and, two days later, two men come out in a truck to fix it, when all the janitor had to do was phone the local hardware store and get it fixed in an hour.

"It takes them a year to get a blackboard." (Dunnville)

Teachers speak of not knowing their board members anymore, of not knowing the teachers. Parents complain their children are being shifted around without adequate consultation; bus routes are altered without adequate knowledge of conditions in the specific area. Parents do not know whom to approach to complain. Political representation is considered inadequate:

"Our representatives say...they're just like a puppet on a string...The Head Director gives no satisfaction. He just walks away and leaves everyone high and dry until he comes back... and then he just says what he wants and it goes that way."

In some communities, participants say they have no political representation on the county board, and wonder what their fate will be in regional government:

"We always had a representative from out this way, and after we went on county board our nearest representative is in Jarvis...Are we going to lose representation on our Council when we go regional government?" (Hagersville, Haldimand)

Loss of contact has meant a loss of public interest and participation in education. According to a township official in Haldimand, it was barely able to obtain sufficient nominations for county board of education at the last municipal election, and public interest in voting was low; whereas previously there had always been keen public interest in township education boards. Many participants wanted to bring the boards back under local control:

"There's no communication...Nobody knows what's going on...I bet 50 percent of the people don't even know who represents them."
(Selkirk, Haldimand)

"We used to do things because we figured it was for our community, our children...(Cayuga, Haldimand)

There is general recognition of the work done by the county boards in equalizing educational standards across their jurisdictions and improving the quality of education in the poor schools:

"...you wouldn't believe the atrocious conditions in some of the schools before." (Charlottetown, Norfolk)

One participant was quite specific about the importance of the improvements wrought by the county board:

"Had it not been for the county board, we would never have stayed...in the township of Walpole."

Other participants accept, but resent, having to pay increased taxes to carry the burden of the poorer townships.

Clearly, the complaints about high taxes, although frequent and deeply felt, are not the entire story. Participants complained at one time about higher taxes and at another about the lack of equipment in the schools. It would seem that the basic complaint is rooted in the questions of public control and accessibility, and government responsiveness, rather than in higher taxes per se. It is not that taxes went up, but that those most affected felt they had had no effective say in deciding the allocation of resources and the justification and extent of the tax increase. In the words of a participant from Dunnville, "You can't beat your own men running your own schools."

LOCAL IDENTIFICATION

In an earlier report - Report on Group Interviews - we commented on the participants' identification with and love of their local area or community. In that instance we were dealing with 100 opinion leaders, half of them municipal councillors, and it was to be expected they would like their community. The pattern, however, was repeated in the

larger sample:

"I like being here. This is a quiet area...I can walk...you get to know the people around a little bit better...you can have a certain identity...I like the scale of the whole thing... I'd hate to live in a place like Toronto where ...they treat you like just one of the crowd... Sometimes when you work you don't even see the sun, because everything is underground ,,, You're trapped in an environment where the human being is just part of the mechanism ...not even a very important part..."
(Port Dover, Norfolk)

"Nice and easy-going..." (Woodhouse, Norfolk)

"In many ways, more freedom..." (ibid)

"We've got a community spirit." (Jarvis, Haldimand)

"I like the farm...working out in the fields...the satisfaction of knowing you've accomplished something during the year." (South Walsingham, Norfolk)

"I think it's a real privilege for children to grow up and know the different weeds and the different plants, and there are getting to be fewer and fewer places that they can wander to see them..."
(Norwich)

"Anyone who wants to can get involved."
(Caledonia, Hagersville)

"We can be...interested in what's going on...I always like to go to Council meetings...I'm more interested in township affairs than I am in county or (Provincial) government..." (Selkirk, Haldimand)

The theme is constant throughout all meetings. The sense of local loyalty, of community identity, of preference for this type of rural small-town life dominates all discussion. It is the source from which all responses to regionalism are formulated.

In contrast is the distaste for large-scale urban life. A typical comment:

"Another thing like Toronto - we need that like a hole in our heads." (Courtland, Norfolk)

"I know a lot of people in the city who don't even know their neighbours - we know people for miles around." (Hagersville, Haldimand)

"They're like a machine." (South Walsingham, Norfolk)

"If you get bigger, you so lose your community spirit...People are unwilling to work for the community...You don't get people contributing to the community...They say 'everybody else is getting paid, I want my buck out of it too'." (Tillsonburg)

"The whole atmosphere tears me right up." (Waterford High School, Norfolk)

The attitude towards large cities, however, is ambivalent. Cities mean jobs, attractions which hold the young, keep families together. The argument in each group turns to the question of growth, industry and, inevitably, pollution.

GROWTH, INDUSTRY AND POLLUTION

Many participants see industrial growth, and its consequences, as the end of the life they have known and loved.

"I've got nothing against expansion, but I don't want another Brantford...Toronto either - the pollution and the stink." (Waterford High School, Norfolk)

"If the population even doubled, people wouldn't know each other. It'd be just like Toronto."
(ibid)

The attitude of the two young persons quoted above is significant for the emphasis placed upon the qualities of life considered important by their parents. But in this same group were others more concerned with economic factors, with jobs.

"People are going to want places to live. I can see Waterford really expanding...the shops... we could really benefit."

"...it sure would be great if we could get some industry here."

The issue is grave. Participants wrestle back and forth with it. It is the only issue on which there is significant indecision in each group, and no consensus.

"From the standpoint of sharing the tax load, we should have industry." (Caledonia, Haldimand)

"We'd be glad to have industry in Seneca or Walpole Townships, but we don't want it here." (ibid)

"There's no doubt we'd lose a little of our democracy if industry came in because money talks and (industrialists) have that much control over the people who get into government." (Selkirk, Haldimand)

"If industry comes a mile further, I'll get out of the area altogether." (ibid)

"It creates more jobs; our families in time to come will be able to stay in this area and still make a good living." (North Walsingham, Norfolk)

"For every job that's created, three people come in to take it, so you get welfare problems, housing problems." (Simcoe, Norfolk)

Participants complained that the new industry moving into the area was not using local labour, that the workers were commuting from outside, and that the area was not benefitting as it should.

A major issue in all groups, closely tied to the matter of quality of life, was pollution.

"You know what they're going to do? They're going to do nothing. They're just going to carry on. There's going to be no control on industry or pollution." (Woodhouse, Norfolk)

"I don't think anybody in the area really minds those industries locating there, providing they don't ruin the environment." (North Walsingham, Norfolk)

"Instead of walking out on nice white sand and looking at the bottom (of the lake), you're walking in slime up to your knees." (Woodhouse, Norfolk).

"The anti-pollution laws aren't strong enough." (Delhi, Norfolk)

Fear of pollution and environmental destruction are prime motivations for improved planning and control.

LOCAL VS. OUTSIDE CONTROL

Discussion of pollution, industrialization, urbanization leads to the question of control.

"We can do whatever we want as long as we do what Toronto tells us to do." (Windham, Norfolk)

This attitude is widely held across both counties, and is not connected to any particular party or leader. Rather it seems to be a malaise that goes deeper than political affiliation or ideology.

"We're dictated to by the Province." (Selkirk, Haldimand)

"Boy, this Health Department, they can really squelch you." (Oneida, Haldimand)

"You'll never have a vote when Toronto or whoever decides this (regional government)."
(Courtland, Norfolk)

"...we depend so much on Queen's Park and they really don't have the time to look at Waterford and what Waterford needs, but Waterford...knows what it needs..."
(Waterford High School, Norfolk)

The prevailing attitude is summed up by the following quotations from some of the Simcoe groups:

"Municipal government is the closest to the people. It's the oldest form of government - and if it's working effectively it can do more for the actual day to day welfare of the people than any form of government."

"They take the power from the townships and municipalities and the counties and give more to the Provincial Government."

"The only thing they (municipal government) can enact are dog by-laws."

"We need to get back some of the local jurisdiction that has been taken away."

These statements are echoed in group after group across the study area and outside:

"...if something's wrong with your taxes you can't go to your local council, you have to contact London. Well, who in London cares anything about you? Your local council does."
(Norwich)

Regional government is not viewed as a means of restoring power to the local areas; rather it is considered to be another way to deprive local areas of the few remaining powers left to them, and thereby reduce the individual:

"...if we go to this whole mass regional government, we're going to lose our identity as municipalities; we're even going to lose our identity as individuals." (Courtland, Norfolk)

Some participants believe, however, that their elected local councillors lack the training to deal with the changes on the horizon.

"You can get elected to council and not have any training at all... Instead of taking the power away from them (municipal councillors), why not train them to do it properly, because they're right here to make the decisions when you need it right away." (Courtland, Norfolk)

"...with industry coming in, I don't think...our local governments have the knowledge to plan...They're not educated enough...That doesn't necessarily mean that regional government is a good thing, but we need more capable people out here." (Hagersville High School, Haldimand)

"...our township councillors know the area. They're...mature enough to know what's best without being sent away and educated." (Hagersville High School, Haldimand)

There is, however, one form of regionalism which is advocated by most participants: planning.

PLANNING

Support for inter-municipal planning arises out of the participants' concern for protecting the quality of the environment, retaining the best aspects of community life, and accommodating the changes they all acknowledge as inevitable.

"Look at the Niagara Region. There's no countryside, no villages...It's all mixed in together. Who wants that? It's crummy."
(Port Dover, Norfolk)

"Let's control the growth areas and still retain this farm land." (Windham, Norfolk)

This does not mean removing planning to another level of government. Many participants expressed the wish that planning be carried on at the local level.

"As long as Norfolk county council does the planning for this area, or each township...this is fine, they know what they're doing. But if you've got somebody in Brantford or Toronto...they don't know what they're doing. There's always politics involved." (Charlottetown, Norfolk)

"They have it designated now: green areas, industrial areas, residential areas. But why do you have to have a regional government to do this?" (Windham, Norfolk)

Many people, however, recognized the need for a stronger planning power to deal with the more powerful forces now at work in the area.

"If we had a larger body, they could control industry." (Courtland, Norfolk)

Regionalism, therefore, is seen as inter-municipal cooperation rather than a new, superior government structure.

"I think we ought to be able to plan with our neighbours as neighbours rather than as one large household." (Jarvis, Haldimand)

"Planning possibly can be better on a little larger scale." (ibid)

"This is a thing that has to be done gradually." (ibid)

"I think in other areas it came too big and too fast." (ibid)

"We have to create a series of communities in which we are...concerned about our children ...the family...green areas...very good planning; we are the people who have to enforce that." (Port Dover, Norfolk)

In addition to the general aspects of planning, participants expressed concern for specifics, particularly pollution control, recreation areas, preservation of farm land, and protection of historic buildings.

"Is this the world we want to live in, where everything that has cultural or historical importance will all be gone, and in its place we'll only have stainless steel and glass and concrete...?" (Port Dover, Norfolk)

"There's one thing for sure; we've got to have this farm land." (Windham, Norfolk)

"You've got to think of recreation for all these people coming in." (ibid)

"Long Point should not be a recreational area. Our animals need it. We've got to have something for our wildlife." (Woodhouse, Norfolk)

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

"What do we mean by regional government? They should tell us." (Courtland, Norfolk)

"How do we get information on regional government?" (Simcoe, Norfolk)

"This has been going on for four years, and I still don't know what regional government is." (ibid)

"Is there anything we could read on this?" (Dunnville, Haldimand)

"I think the powers-that-be, whoever they are - it's up to them to inform our people a little better." (Fisherville, Haldimand)

"I want someone to tell me." (Haldimand-Norfolk border)

"Do you think anybody knows the answers?"
(Fisherville, Haldimand)

"If we could just find out how regional government is handled we could discuss it more intelligently." (Hagersville, Haldimand)

"Unless some of us are experts, I think it's a bit like discussing the barley crop in Northern Uganda." (Haldimand-Norfolk border)

"Is regional government supposed to cover everything our town council now covers?
...In regional government, I presume we don't have a town council." (Dunnville, Haldimand)

Judging by the evidence, conventional methods of informing the public - and it should be emphasized that many participants in this study can be described as opinion leaders and better informed than most - are inadequate and require revision. A significant theme running through the above quotations and other comments is the participants' desire to be given concrete details with which they can grapple. There is a feeling that both sides of the question are not being explored for the public's benefit. In the words of one participant:

"What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?"

Another constant theme was the probable futility of LOIS and other efforts in soliciting public participation and opinion: regional government would be imposed regardless of what the people wanted.

"It's going to be pushed down our throats
...It doesn't work with the school boards
and you can prove every last fact, and yet
they'll never go back; and if they push us
into this...what's the point? They keep
saying we have a right to say something, but
we don't have a right to in the end."
(Courtland, Norfolk)

"...they've already got their minds made up,
we're going to have regional government,
and there's no way anybody's going to change
their minds." (Norwich)

"If they decide to have regional government,
they'll have it no matter what anybody says."
(ibid)

This attitude is a variation of the helplessness, frustration and distrust discussed previously. The public remains to be shown the Government is sincere in its efforts to solicit public participation and involvement.

We have already discussed most of the major themes cited in opposition to regional government. It would be possible to fill this entire report with opinions opposed to regional government. In all groups we audited the predominant attitude was one of opposition to regional government at this

time. There is no group in which there is even the beginnings or shadow of a consensus in favour of regional government. Many of the reasons cited by participants have already been stated in previous sections of this report. By now the reader will have surmised the major sources of public concern and begun to discern programs designed to meet these concerns. Consequently, we will summarize these concerns in what appear to us to be the most useful categories.

Representation and Community

The two are closely allied: the first representing the ability of the citizens to be effective in community matters, the second the existence of citizenry in a community.

Representation: This seems to underly all other objections. It is not simply a matter of political representation, although as we have seen there is considerable concern about that:

"If you want to take the government away from the people, just get rid of our local municipal councils...You'll lose touch with the people."
(South Walsingham, Norfolk)

"Are we going to have any representation from Rainham?" (Fisherville, Haldimand)

Rather, the issue is the more fundamental one of participation and involvement in the whole range of decision-making which affects one's life and community, of autonomy, control over one's communal life and individuality: to repeat the statement of the participant in Courtland, "...we're going to lose our identity as municipalities; we're even going to lose our identity as individuals."

Allied to this central concern are the issues of red tape and bureaucracy.

"Instead of having three governments, we'd have four...an awful lot of red tape." (Dunnville, Haldimand)

"...it's just another level of bureaucracy to get through." (Jarvis, Haldimand)

"As soon as they get regional government, they have to appoint a whole lot of men at a high salary..." (Selkirk, Haldimand)

"And the people who sit in offices and tell you how to run your town don't know how...They give you money for things you don't need and they won't give you money for things you do need." (Simcoe, Norfolk)

Regional government, even county government, is seen as much less responsive to community needs than local government:

"The bigger it gets the further away you are from people you want to do things." (Cayuga, Haldimand)

It is accepted as an axiom by all participants that bigger government is further away from the people, more remote, much less responsive, and overbearing.

Community: Without representation, the community is powerless and it is the community which is of prime concern to the participants. We have already cited at length in this report, and in others, the importance of the community, the local community, to all the participants. They see the creation of another level of government, and the loss of local power, as a critical erosion of community autonomy, leading to apathy and decay.

"There's an old saying 'You can't fight City Hall'; in a small community you can, and you can win." (Haldimand-Norfolk border)

"I'd say that Delhi or Langton or...whatever town is under 5,000 population, is going to be lost in the shuffle." (Delhi, Norfolk)

There is widespread concern that growth, symbolized by regional government, will mean the end of the small community and the values embodied in that type of communal living:

"In a small place people care...In a city a person could live right on your doorstep and they don't care whether you live or die." (Norwich)

"Once you grow past a certain scale, you lose the values of the small things." (Port Dover, Norfolk)

Taxation

It is accepted by all concerned that regional government, or county government, means higher taxes.

The two words occurring most frequently in all groups are probably 'taxes' and 'costs', with the adjectives 'rising' and 'increased' appended. As we have said, however, it is our opinion that taxation is not the critical issue: the critical issues are representation and community autonomy, or local government. There is no question at all of the sincerity and depth of the participants' reactions to the tax question, but it seems to us the reaction is generated not simply by the tax increases, but by the feeling of the participants that they had no say either in the increases or in the allocation of the revenues. The taxes were imposed on them without their effective concurrence. It is their isolation from the taxing decisions, rather than the decision itself, which is of fundamental concern to them.

Also, there is the fear of bureaucrats:

"When the government gets further away, administration gets hog-wild." (Oneida, Haldimand)

"The bigger the organization, the more feather-bedding, the more people can be hired and no one knows what they're doing." (Cayuga, Haldimand)

"It's the most beautiful set-up to give you the run-around there ever was." (Windham, Norfolk)

"I just think of more and more men up there doing less and less...and taxing the farmers higher and higher just to keep them there." (Caledonia, Haldimand)

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that taxes will go up substantially if regional government is established. Constant reference is made in this regard to the experiences both of the county school boards and the Niagara Regional Government. That, by itself, is cause for grave concern, especially among farmers for whom cash flow is a serious problem.

"The most frightening thing about regional government, as a farmer, are the taxes..." (Caledonia, Haldimand)

"If the taxes go up, where is it going to come from?" (Fisherville, Haldimand)

The issue is also discussed in terms of services. The question seems to be not whether more services are provided but the point of providing them.

"...do we in our modern society need that many more services?" (Charlottetown, Norfolk)

"There are a lot of services we don't have, but we get along fine without them." (Caledonia, Haldimand)

"I think we're serviced right up to the hilt." (Charlottetown, Norfolk)

There is also the question of whether the increase in services will not lead to a proportionately larger increase in waste.

"When you group together the demands for services multiply so greatly that you're not as well off as ...when you were a smaller unit." (Caledonia, Haldimand)

"This keeps getting back to more money all the time...I'm not against that, provided you get something for your money. Sometimes you have a large group and you don't have the amenities that you have now and you're paying more." (ibid)

"Speaking strictly of county services, there's nothing (I want). We pay to have our garbage picked up, we have excellent fire protection ...police protection, the roads...are good... What does regional government have to offer me then?" (Haldimand-Norfolk border)

"You get the old story: it's going to cost you more money, but you'll get better service. And all you get is somebody with a few more initials behind his name who wants to do less and less." (Simcoe, Norfolk)

The concept of self-help runs strongly amongst the participants. Many of them object to the idea that in a regional government their tax money would go to help other municipalities which were not able to take care of themselves. The argument summed up in one of the

Dunnville groups:

"The towns are going to have to dish out all the money. Why should they have to take care of the smaller places?" (Dunnville, Haldimand)

"And yet, we'd be a smaller place wanting money." (ibid)

"I have a feeling you're going to have to look after the smaller places whether you want to or not...if not through regional government then through Provincial Government." (ibid)

Support for Regional Government

While opinion in all groups audited ran strongly against regional government, there were some participants who ventured the idea that it was not all bad. It might be pointed out that those who said this usually did so in a questioning tone, as if not sure that what they said was right: they were certainly far less forthcoming and decisive than those opposed.

"Regional government is change and we must go along with the change. It's impossible to impose 1930 standards on a 1970 life."
(Haldimand-Norfolk border)

"You can't operate small anymore. Whether we like it or not (regional government) will have to come...however, it still costs a lot of money...Couldn't they get the blunders straightened out before they get into regional government? Couldn't they foresee a lot of things?" (Tillsonburg)

"It has merit, but they must be very careful."
(South Walsingham, Norfolk)

"...although costs will be greater, probably
the benefits will be well worth it." (Caledonia,
Haldimand)

"The people in this area are concerned about de-
veloping this whole area sensibly...It would,
therefore, seem sensible to have...(Haldimand
and Norfolk) organized under one government."
(Port Dover, Norfolk)

"If some of this (local) authority can come back
to the region, this would be an advantage."
(Haldimand-Norfolk border)

Attitudes to Joining Haldimand and Norfolk and Adjacent Areas

This question was discussed much less fully and widely
than the others discussed above. There is no clear feeling of
consensus of opinion expressed in the tapes, although this is
not to deny that such a consensus, either pro or con, might
exist. The following are set down as simply suggestive of
possibly widespread attitudes.

Caledonia

"My thinking is that we form an area in our own
county, and Norfolk forms an area in their county.
Then, by trial and error, be it two years, three
years or whatever, (we) then go together."

"I'd be very much opposed to going with Hamilton."

"If it was a question of where other than your home (are you oriented) then you would have to say Hamilton."

"Even though I feel more drawn to Hamilton than toward Norfolk, I still feel that Haldimand-Norfolk would make a much more sensible alliance."

"I sort of feel that Caledonia has been overlooked even as far as Haldimand County goes."

Oneida

"Even if Stelco is half in Haldimand and half in Norfolk, what has that got to do with the two counties going together?"

"We don't want to be hooked up with them (Norfolk); our taxes are high enough now..."

Selkirk

"They (Norfolk) have tobacco, we have cattle and grain. I can't see any way it (regional government) would benefit us."

"I think Norfolk's looking for benefit from the Hydro and Stelco assessment."

"I don't think we have that much in common yet."

"The only reason Norfolk wants to come into Haldimand is because they're going to benefit from it ... We have suffered and gone without a lot of things for a lot of years, and I'd like to see Haldimand go it alone."

"I don't think Norfolk has any right to come in now, when we are going to have things a little better; when they didn't want us when we were a poor little backward county."

"They'd like to get the residential growth, and we'd get the industry and the dirt...They'd collect the money and have clean air."

"Norfolk's all right; I just don't like their attitude sometimes."

Fisherville

"What I was wondering was how two counties so different as Norfolk and Haldimand - how can they join and expect to work together?"

"I can't see how regional government will get along if they (Haldimand-Norfolk) can't agree now."

Jarvis

"... a lot of this regional government talk has been instigated by the County of Norfolk...They never wanted any part of us until they had the feeling we were going to have a high industrial tax base..."

"I think everybody that lives in Haldimand County has a pride in Haldimand County...We hate to see it changed."

"I think we're afraid of the unknown...the uncertainty."

Port Dover

"Norfolk County will have to stop...until Haldimand catches up."

"If our regional government includes the south end of Brantford and the west end of Haldimand and Norfolk, and maybe a little bit of Oxford because ...Tillsonburg is nice, and if it's all centred in Simcoe...that's fine - but if it's centred in Cayuga, it really won't make that much difference to me."

North Walsingham

"It would be ridiculous to change our county boundary and put us in with...Oxford...Maybe Tillsonburg, but it's only shopping really; nothing to do with Oxford County...We have nothing in common with the rest of them...In our area we're on the far end corner of everything...Changing boundaries won't help at all."

Charlotteville

"I think Norfolk County should stay away from it (union with Haldimand). I'm afraid the same thing's going to happen as down the Niagara Peninsula...In the future we're going to be thankful that we have counties like Norfolk...the bread-basket of Ontario."

Windham

"If it was left on a county basis, and the industrial development occurred in Haldimand County, it is Norfolk County that is going to be hit with residential areas...It doesn't pay. (Combining) the two counties...should take care of that situation."

"The industry that does exist now in the two counties is mainly in Norfolk, so we're going to lose that to Haldimand County."

"What's Haldimand County got at the present time?"

"We stand to lose more than we could gain."

Tillsonburg

"If Norfolk-Haldimand looks to Tillsonburg to come into their area of influence, it's the tail wagging the dog...We are a centre ourselves."

REACTION TO LOIS

The reaction of most participants to LOIS was positive and enthusiastic. Admittedly, not many people who thought the exercise a waste of time would likely bother to show up at a meeting. But the enthusiasm of those who did participate was tempered by doubts about the usefulness of the exercise. Some thought of LOIS as a kind of placebo to keep them quiet while Queen's Park made the real decisions; others thought the Government would accept only those parts of the report that suited them. Most participants welcomed the opportunity to state their views, not only in a questionnaire but into a tape recorder to which someone would listen - or would they listen? It seems to us, at this phase

of the study, that one of the most serious problems the Provincial Government faces in its government reorganization studies in Haldimand-Norfolk, and perhaps elsewhere, is persuading citizens that it is truly concerned with generating genuine citizen participation in the planning process; the second problem is devising means by which that genuine citizen participation can occur and be integrated into the planning process.

"I think it's great that they actually want to hear what people are saying - if they use it." (Mount Hope)

"They'll file it in a drawer." (ibid)

"What does it really matter?...How interested are they in our views?...Will these views change anything?" (Delhi, Norfolk)

"I'd like to think they're going to listen." (ibid)

"It makes you feel like you've got something to say...It's probably already decided; but still ...there are going to be proposals that will be changed slightly by public opinion, perhaps." (Waterford High School, Norfolk)

"I think this should have been started before." (Windham, Norfolk)

"What happens if the people don't want this (regional government)? What good are our opinions if they're not going to listen to them?" (ibid)

"Do you think they'd be doing this at all if there wasn't an election coming up?" (ibid)

"Look how much money is spent on all these surveys. It's just a big waste of money." (ibid)

"What I was wondering is why they are asking these questions now? It's about four or five years late." (Woodhouse, Norfolk)

"I can't help feeling that filling out the questionnaire now, before you know anything about it, is sort of senseless really. It kind of gives the impression that we're going to get (regional government) whether we want it or not, so why bother?" (Caledonia, Haldimand)

"If this goes through the whole area they will get an honest opinion of what people think." (Fisherville, Haldimand)

"I think there should be a vote...(ibid)

"They're going to take out bits and parts (of the LOIS report) and only the bits and the parts they like." (Hagersville, Haldimand)

"I think the very fact that there are these meetings and there is a questionnaire is a step in the right direction." (Jarvis, Haldimand)



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